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THE COMMUNITY

GROTON, MASSACHUSETTS

THE STORY OF A NEIGHBORHOOD

BY EDWARD ADAMS RICHARDSON

MARCH, 1911
AYER, MASSACHUSETTS

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with the compliments of
Edward Adam Richardson



Home of Benjamin Hall. 1843—1856.

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THE STORY OF A NEIGHBORHOOD

By EDWARD ADAMS RICHARDSON

The subject matter of the following sketch has become of more than passing interest to the writer who lived for a number of years in that part of Groton known as the Community.

The settlement in Groton, called for years, the Community, was a gathering place in the year 1847 and thereafter of kindred spirits who had become knitted together in the bonds of friendship and in their faith in the second advent of Christ as set forth by William Miller in the early forties.

Men of strong mental attainments became interested and, as viewed in this later day, we can but feel that they were sincere for the greater part and no more to be scoffed at than those other experimentors who took up with the dietetic schemes at Fruitlands and Brook Farm.

To preserve for future historians some of the incidents which led up to the establishment of the settlement and to give an account of its continuance and decline is the intent of the following article in the writing of which I wish to acknowledge the assistance rendered by my father, Joseph Henry Richardson, who was born in Westford, Mass., December 26, 1835, and whose mind is a storehouse of

memories of those early days. I have studiously avoided many personal allusions and recorded only such characteristics of individuals as are necessary for a proper understanding of the subject.

That former residents of this village may know of some of the changes here, a few views of buildings of the Groton Episcopal School are inserted in this article, through the courtesy of Mr. George E. Meyet, who is connected with the work of the school. These buildings, for the most part, stand on the Graves farm in the old field, orchard and pasture between the locations of the old barn and the Benjamin F. Hartwell place, surrounded by extensive lawns and trees and shrubbery.

Groton, just before the coming of the railroads, was an important inland town and to it came many people who sought here to pass their declining years in the peaceful retirement of a good old town with a healthful environment.

The religious schisms of a few years ago had been adjusted and the three churches in the town had become established and working in harmony when the anti-slavery agitation was started and closely following it, the religious movement known as Millerism, or the belief in the second coming of Christ, was taken up by a

few at the centre of the town, while in the country at large, eventually, over 50,000 people were credited as being believers in the faith.

One pleasant autumn day in the year 1840, four young men were tramping in company along the "Great Road," from Concord to Groton. The party was composed of Theodore Parker and George Ripley of Boston, Christopher P. Cranch of Newton, and A. Bronson Alcott of Concord.

To fully appreciate the conditions which led the people of 1840 and the following years to take up this ism, we must consider that it was a period given up largely to an analysis of all beliefs and dogmas, and that in those days there were not lacking men of independent thought and initiative.

It was this spirit that led Messrs. Parker, Cranch, Ripley and Alcott to walk in company over the road from Boston to Groton to attend a Christian Union Convention called by the Second Advents and Come-outers, who had sat under the preaching of Rev. Silas Hawley. His supporters in Groton were called Hawleyites.

This convention was called for the purpose of establishing a new church, or new denomination, as we would say today, in which a greater freedom of belief should be allowed, having especial reference to the expression by the Come-outers of their belief in the abolition of slavery and looking to the foundation of the Unity of the church.

Leading citizens of the town were favorable to this movement, but in the convention, which was attended by delegates from all over New England and New York State, all was not harmonious and no new church was established.

Many of those interested in Groton were found as friends of the Advent faith in the years immediately after. The story of this convention is told at some considerable length in Dr. Samuel A. Green's Groton Historical Series, Vol. I, Nos. IV and XI.

In the following years there came other movements led by the abolitionists, the transcendentalists at Brook Farm, Roxbury, the colony at Fruitlands, Harvard, and political bodies of whigs, free-soilers, locofocos and others with various shades of belief.

There are men now living in this vicinity who remember the great wave

of religious interest which reached to all parts of the country. The various cults and isms had hosts of followers, some of whom became famous as noted thinkers and investigators.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, in a lecture, entitled "New England Reformers," delivered in Boston, March 3, 1844, says: "Whoever has had an opportunity of acquaintance with society in New England during the last twenty-five years, with those middle and with those leading sections that may constitute any just representation of the character and aim of the community, will have been struck with the great activity of thought and experimenting."

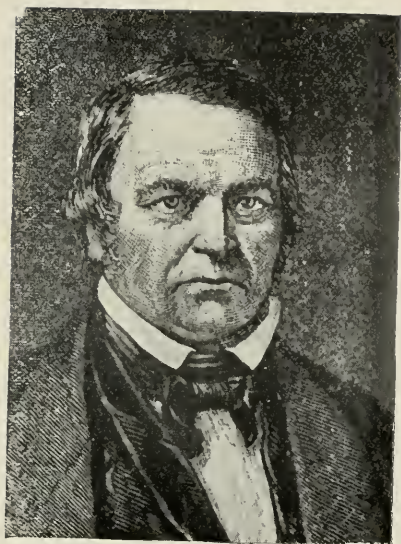
The Advent belief called new, though appearing at intervals for the past one thousand years, was based on an interpretation of the scriptures not in accord with the generally accepted rendering and was dependent largely on the prophesies of the old and new testaments.

The following extract is from a letter written before 1843 by William Miller to a brother preacher: "I understand that the judgment day will be a thousand years long. The righteous are raised and judged in the commencement of that day, the wicked in the end of that day. I believe that the saints will be raised and judged about the year 1843, according to Moses' prophesy in Leviticus, Chapter 26. Ezeiel, Chapter 39. Daniel, Chapters 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. Hosea, Chapter 5, and Revelations, the whole book, and many other prophets have spoken of these things. Time will soon tell if I am right.

"I believe in the glorious, immortal and personal reign of Jesus Christ, with all his people on the purified earth forever. I believe the millennium is between the two resurrections and two judgments, the righteous and the wicked, the just and the unjust.

"I hope the dear friends of Christ will lay by all prejudice and look at and examine these three views by the only rule and standard, the Bible."

All the comments of the day acclaimed William Miller as a good man, sincere but under a delusion. Meetings were held all over New England and somewhat in the states at the westward. Those interested were accustomed at first to go to the



William Miller. 1781—1849



Brooks House. Built 1884.



Hundred House. Erected 1891.



Benjamin F. Hartwell Home. 1847—1897.

larger places like Boston and Lowell, and later to meetings held in the suburban towns by various preachers among whom were William Miller, Elder Cole and Elder Preble, the last of whom was recently living at the advanced age of ninety years.

At times large assemblies or camp meetings were conducted, particularly in Littleton, where many gathered on the farm of Andrew Whitcomb to hear the doctrine set forth by Mr. Miller and his followers.

Some of the leading citizens of the surrounding towns, in all sincerity took up the idea and among them the Whitcombs of Littleton, Leightons and Richardsons of Westford, Hall, Bancrofts, Gates, Cragin and Hartwells of Groton, became interested if not actual followers of Millerism.

To these camps by stages, barges, and other conveyances, the countryside came as for a holiday and some who came to scoff remained to pray.

In Westford the Leightons had been engaged in a small way in the manufacture of boots and shoes, which business they afterward continued in Pepperell to which place Albert Leighton moved the business in 1848, and where he died on January 2, 1905, in his ninety-second year.

The Richardsons in Westford had both been school teachers for many years in early life and with the Leightons had closely followed all the advanced thought of the day. They had frequently made trips by team in company to Boston to listen to William Lloyd Garrison, the anti-slavery champion, and it was hinted that their homes were stations on the underground railroad.

In Westford, William Miller explained by elaborate charts the certain end of the world which he had computed would come to pass between the vernal equinoxes of 1843-1844, first set for March, 1844, and then again for October, 1844.

The Lowell Courier of October 17, 1844, commenting on the excitement says: "The 21 inst. (next Tuesday), is we believe the 'last day of Grace.'"

The same newspaper reports: "The Newburyport Courier states that on Saturday last, the following notice was posted on the door of one of the dry goods stores in that town: "Believing as I most sincerely do, that the Lord Jesus Christ will, in a few

days, come in the clouds of heaven, I retire from this shop: as I am determined, God being my helper, that my works shall correspond with my faith."

Saturday afternoon, Oct. 12, 1844.

The Newburyport paper adds that the Millerite fever seems to be on the increase and that other stores were closing and the signs taken down, expecting that the end of the world would come before Monday morning.

In Pennsylvania the advents were in camp in groves Monday and Tuesday nights. Not much newspaper comment is made on these events, perhaps largely because the country was in the very midst of a great political contest where the whigs and abolitionists were each seeking the ascendancy which resulted in the success of the democracy. George S. Boutwell of Groton was a democratic candidate for congress and Franklin Pierce, "New Hampshire's gifted and eloquent son," was stumping the State of Massachusetts for the democracy, and spoke in Lowell, October 24, 1844.

Daniel Webster delivered a two-hour address on the topics of the day in Pepperell on November 5, 1844. Over one thousand people gathered in the common before the church and the meeting was opened with prayer by Rev. Charles Babbidge. The auditors came from Groton, Shirley, Ashby, Townsend, Dunstable and Pepperell, and the address was fully reported in the Lowell Courier on November 7, 1844.

Benjamin F. Hartwell was born and lived in Groton, but later moved to Acton. In 1844 he was living at Littleton Common and his house was a gathering place for the believers from Westford, Acton and Littleton, who assembled on October 10, 1844, to await the end of the world.

That night the adults passed the time in prayer and reading of the scriptures in an upper room, while the children slept on the lower floor.

It is of course needless to say that the end of the world came not, and in grievous disappointment they went back to their farms to gather those crops which had not already been put in store for them, against their need, by their unbelieving friends and relatives, some of whom showed much indignation at the neglect of their

farm work and lack of foresight which led some even to give away their stock.

Soon after these events, new computations were made and Mr. Miller stated he had made an error in his reckoning and new dates were set for the end of the world.

In Groton Centre, Benjamin Hall and his followers had erected for a place of meeting the building called by the world's people, the Polliwog Chapel, from its location near a pond hole, where Willow Dale Road leads off from Hollis Street, next to the home of John H. Hartwell, who lived there at that time.

John and Benjamin Hartwell, skilled carpenters, assisted in the work, and to this place came visitors from Westford, Littleton and other towns about for the services and these meetings were a sort of reunion of those who had met together in Westford and Littleton.

The Polliwog Chapel was sold in November, 1844, to Daniel Needham and George S. Boutwell, moved to Main Street and made over into Liberty Hall, which was burned March 31, 1878. After the removal of the chapel for other purposes, advent meetings were held in a small way at the homes of Mr. Hall and Minot Leighton, who lived in the Moses Gill house, next to the present Wharton residence, also at the house of Aaron Mason on Main Street, Groton, the house known as the Nelson Shumway place, and in 1911, as the Dr. Kilbourn hospital.

Benjamin Hall was a native of Westford, a descendant of Willard Hall, the first minister of that town, and was born on July 12, 1796, on the Day farm between the centre of the town and Graniteville.

In early life, with his brother William, he engaged in the wholesale clothing business in Boston for about fifteen years, and when his brother moved to England, the firm became importers of woolens and other goods.

In England, William became a publisher and obtained the royal distinction as publisher to the crown and amassed a large fortune. There was also another brother, Judge Willard Hall of Wilmington, Delaware.

We find that Benjamin Hall lived for six years in Acton before coming to Groton, which was probably in 1838, when he bought the farm on the

Nashua River, though it does not appear that he lived upon it until 1840, as shown in the account of Theodore Parker's visit to Groton. His second wife was Caroline Bancroft, a sister of George and Henry Bancroft of Groton. The daughter and only child of Mr. and Mrs. Hall, Caroline, married, July 15, 1842, Daniel Needham, a son of James Needham, who was a Quaker from Salem and had been engaged in business in Boston, and had formed a close friendship with the Halls.

Daniel Needham's mother and his brothers Ezeikel and Benjamin, and sisters Olive and Lydia had moved up from Salem and were for years residents of the town.

Daniel Needham was admitted to practice at the bar of Middlesex County in 1847, and the success of Mr. Hall in Groton was due in a large measure to the family relationship which gave to him the advice of an honorable and intelligent counsellor, and the Community a steadfast friend.

Mr. Mason was a wheelwright and builder of sleighs, wagons and stage-coaches, and nearby was a large shop in which was a huge treadmill, horse power for operating the machinery.

The Zedutha Stanley place had been sold by the heirs, Nabby Stanley, Polly Jaquith and Dorcas Hopkins early in 1835, and in October, 1838, Mr. Hall took title to two separate parcels, making a farm of 120 acres extending along the Groton-Shirley Road from the J. J. Graves farm, now Groton School land, to the farms of Deacon Walter Dickson and Major Amos Farnsworth, and westerly to the Nashua River. In his early ownership the farm was let, meanwhile the wood and timber on Pine Hill was removed to quite an extent.

On Butler's map of Groton published in 1847, we have along this street the owners to which list many additions were soon to be made. It would seem that Rodolphus Parker, whose wife was said to be a descendant of Gov. Dudley, had moved up from the neighborhood of the Concord-Acton line in about 1846, and that Walter Keyes from Acton was living in the Hall place.

At the south were the farms of Walter Dickson, Jacob Pollard and Major Amos Farnsworth, and to the



Groton School Chapel. Erected 1900.



Gymnasium. Built 1902.



Home of Lucy M. Richardson. 1849—1870.



School House—Groton School. Erected 1898.

southeast was the large farm of Benjamin Moors. To the north was living George Martin Shattuck on the farm more recently known as the Joshua Wait place, and the next farm towards Groton Centre was owned and occupied by John J. Graves, familiarly known as Jack Graves. This farm is now owned by the Groton School and upon it are most of the school buildings.

About this time, as shown by the conveyances, Mr. Hall conceived the idea of establishing the Community upon and near his farm. The interest of Mr. Hall and his followers had fallen away from the general advent doctrine, but we must understand that by this time the community of thought had led to a close friendly acquaintance, and while the real value of their belief was often questioned, among themselves they were drawn the closer and others of their kindred and friends joined them.

About 1847, Mr. Hall conveyed a large part of his farm to his long-time friend, Benjamin F. Hartwell, whom he had known in Acton, and to others were sold smaller lots, and these purchasers were assisted in building their homes.

Benjamin F. Hartwell was a scholarly man, and like his brother John, inherited marked mental abilities and physical strength. These qualities were repeated to a great degree in his four children who have filled important places in the world's work and who became leaders in their chosen professions. He was early in life a teacher and studied for the ministry; was a great reader and later in life a good all-around carpenter. He erected and moved buildings and contracted for the construction of churches, schools, houses, barns and bridges. He died on September 15, 1897.

At this time other settlers were Joseph Richards of Newburyport, who at one time drove stages between that city and Boston; John Fitz and Merrick Hale from Winchendon, who were skilled woodworkers; Joseph A. Cushing from Stoneham and Mrs. Weston and Minot Leighton from Westford. From Westford in 1849, also came Mrs. Lucy Richardson and her family of young children, and bought of John H. Hartwell, sixteen acres of the farm he had purchased on April 10, 1847, of Mr. Shattuck. Mrs. Rich-

ardson, in company with Miss Betsey Ash, built on this land a cottage house which shortly after the war of the rebellion, was sold with a portion of the land to Jordan Goodwin, a returned soldier, and moved northerly to the fork of the roads, enlarged several times by various owners and finally burned on July 19, 1904.

Miss Ash moved to South Groton, and Mrs. Richardson had built just south of her cottage location a large two-story house, partly from the wheelwright shop of Mr. Mason, which was taken down at Groton Centre and re-erected here. She lived here until her marriage again in 1870, and moved to the house of her husband, Mr. Francis B. Parker of Chelmsford. Her place was purchased by her son, Joseph H. Richardson, who after several years' occupancy, moved to Ayer in 1887, and sold it to Mr. George Whitney, the present occupant, in 1890.

After Mrs. Richardson moved into her new house, the cottage was rented to various persons. Mr. Albert Billings, who was somewhat of a shrewd business man, occupied it for a season while interested in the yeast business with Noah Dutton and Joseph Richards. This business was started in Mr. Richard's dwelling house further up the street. Mr. Billings will be mentioned later. Joseph A. Cushing bought a part of the Hall place which here extended southerly to the old Moors farm, in later years known as the Culver farm. The cross road from the Hall place leading easterly to the South Groton Road was laid out by Mr. Hall through the Cushing land and land of Lucy Richardson, and a sharp turn was made around the lot of Miss Nabby Stanley just before it reached the east road.

Mr. Cushing built his home and set out grape vines and fruit trees which under the care of the next owner, Mr. Newman, grew to bear fruit of most excellent quality as all the boys of forty years ago will testify. Subsequent owners were Messrs. Coachman, Ring and Swan, under whose occupancy the buildings were burned and most of the fruit trees and vines destroyed. The house and outbuildings have been replaced with a dwelling and an extensive greenhouse plant by the present owner, Mr. H. Huebner, the florist.

John Fitz, Rodolphus Parker and Merrick Hale were located at the end of a lane provided by Mr. Hall off the south side of his farm. Mr. Fitz lived where lately Millard Smith lived, Mr. Parker where a Mr. Rynn lived in the seventies, and Mr. Hale lived on the corner where the lane turned to the right where an instructor's house is now being built for the Groton School.

After 1847, a hoop shaving shop used by Walter Keyes was sold to Miss Rebecca Green, a sister of Mrs. Cushing, and converted into the dwelling where John Hackett or his family have lived for fifty years.

At the rear of a house built for Mrs. Weston from an old barn moved over from the Hall place was erected, an ell extending across the whole end, and on the upper floor was a hall where the first meetings of the advents in this village were held and continued for about four years. This place was conveyed by Mrs. Weston to Minot Leighton and was afterwards known as the Leighton house.

Mr. Hall became the leader of the advent movement in Groton, and in this room was accustomed to explain his belief which differed somewhat from the generally accepted creed in that Mr. Hall preached the establishment of the New Jerusalem right here in Groton, while others, of which Deacon Walter Dickson was a type, believed that the Kingdom of God was to be set up in Palestine, the sacred land of Bible history.

Having a common dooryard and a common pump through which the division line ran, Joseph Richards built his home adjoining the Leighton place. This was afterwards known as the Widow Ann Gilson or Goding house, the home of Thomas and Sumner Gilson, and their sisters, one of whom married Mr. Harrison Goding. These houses stood in front of the present stable of Mr. William Amory Gardner.

Benjamin Hall, Benjamin Hartwell, John Fitz, Joseph Richards, Walter Keyes and Joseph Cushing were largely instrumental in erecting the community shop which at first had a roof sloping to the road. In order to provide a new hall this roof was soon removed and a larger one placed upon it with gable facing the road.

Joseph H. Richardson recalls put-

ting the topmost shingles on this building when erected and that as a lad of sixteen he loaded an ox team at this shop with house finish and drove to Concord and back in one of the coldest days of winter for which he received one dollar for his services which ended late at night.

This shop was erected in 1850, as a sort of partnership affair to furnish employment to some of the residents and with the new hall was a general gathering place and might be properly called the second advent meeting house.

This building was a huge affair with a shingle roof and sides covered with pebbled plaster, and stood nearly opposite the barn on the Hall farm.

On the ground floor in the southwest corner was a huge tread mill horse power, an inclined wheel of about thirty feet diameter. When a horse began to walk around this wheel, a feat that was never accomplished, a drum underneath was set in motion.

The revolving drum below was belted to shafting which operated the various machines for sawing and cutting out stock for wooden boxes, measures and dippers, sometimes called "nog-gins." Doors and windows were also made here and lumber prepared for house finish.

On the second floor, reached by a stairway from about the middle of the front of the building and winding up over the horsepower, were benches for setting up the wooden ware and some other machines.

The top floor in the roof was finished and plastered for a hall and school, and here every night and Sundays services were held for five or six years of the ten years of the community period.

At times school was kept here by Miss Lizzie Mason, daughter of Aaron Mason. She afterwards married a Mr. James Boyd, an advent visitor from Philadelphia, and moved to that city. She married a second time a Mr. Ewell and died in Baltimore in 1894, and is interred in the Mason lot at Ayer. The school was not a large one, having an attendance of about fifteen. The larger boys and girls were for the most part working in various places.

The reading room was an annex to this large building and with commend-



Community Shop. 1850—1878.



Mr. Gardner's Athletic Building. Built 1901.



Groton School Boat House.



Home of Walter Dickson. 1838—1853.

able virtue was erected about 1855, for the use of the young people who numbered over twenty-five. Here were kept newspapers and other reading matter, particularly second advent literature. They also played games and for its maintenance contributed a small amount for heat and lights, which were candles set in large tin chandeliers or spirit lamps, for it was before kerosene came into general use. The shop for many years after 1860, was a neglected building, a menace to the children of the neighborhood, on account of its decayed condition and tendency to fall over and was taken down in 1878, by Mr. Hartwell and worked over into a cottage house on the same spot.

The Deacon Walter Dickson farm was the place where on October 25, 1704, John Davis was killed by Indians in his own dooryard. The event is recorded by a memorial boulder erected in 1910.

Mr. Dickson sold out in 1853 to Henry Moody of Newburyport and went to Palestine in that year.

It does not appear that Mr. Moody affiliated with the advents, though his wife did. He had about opposite the present Huebner place a blacksmith shop which was taken down by Joseph H. Richardson when he bought the farm in 1856. Mr. Moody made ship irons and jack screws which were sent away to be finished, the jacks being teamed to Lowell to have the threads cut at the machine shop of Silver and Gay. Mr. Richardson lived there about a year when he sold to Joseph Dickinson, the elder, whose widow is now living on the farm at the advanced age of eighty-three, with her son Joseph and family.

The story of the experience of the Dickson family has always been of interest to Groton people and a brief account is here given and it will be noticed that the name, Walter Dickson, has been perpetuated for six generations in this vicinity.

Walter Dickson and Walter Dickson, Jr., came to Groton from Cambridge in 1795 and purchased a farm on Farmers' Row.

A third Walter Dickson born on the homestead in 1799 lived there with his brother Charles until he moved to the community location in 1838. He was an exceedingly pious man and was

known as "Deacon." He lived here until 1853, when he sold out and went to Palestine as previously stated. His son, Walter E. settled in Harvard and was the father of Walter Fred Dickson and Philip O. Dickson of that town. The sixth Walter is a son of Walter Fred Dickson above mentioned.

Deacon Walter Dickson had another son, Philip D., who had preceded him in 1852 with his bride Susan, a daughter of Aaron Mason, as a missionary to the Turks and who died in Jerusalem April 25, 1853, and was buried on the Mount of Olives at that city. His widow returned alone from Beirut by sailing vessel in the same year and died September 24, 1863, and is buried in the Mason lot in Ayer.

Infused with the zeal of the missionary cause, the father, Deacon Walter Dickson, his wife and three daughters and son Henry sailed October 11, 1853, aboard the bark, John Winthrop, for Smyrna, thence to Jaffa. Here he lived and continued in missionary work until 1858. Meanwhile his daughters, Almira and Mary, married two Steinbeck brothers.

On January 12, 1858, their home was broken into by brigands and the family brutally assaulted; Frederick Steinbeck, husband of Mary, killed and Mr. Dickson, the elder, left for dead. June 12, 1858, the survivors of the family embarked for the United States from the port of Jaffa, via Alexandria, Egypt.

Here the party separated and Mr. Dickson and son Henry went to Constantinople to consult with the United States minister as to indemnity, then sailing via Malta, London and Liverpool to New York and Boston. The others sailed direct from Alexandria on bark Champion via Spain to Boston, and a remarkable coincidence happened. Both parties arrived in Boston on the same day, September 16, 1858, not having heard from each other since parting at Alexandria and sailing by different routes on a voyage of more than three months' duration.

They arrived in Harvard September 17, 1858, at the home of the son, Walter E. Dickson. Broken in health, Deacon Dickson lived a little over a year and died in Harvard aged sixty years.

The two sons who survived him both enlisted for the war of the rebellion. Henry in Co. B, Sixth reg.,

from Groton Junction and served through the whole war and Walter E. from Charlestown, where he then resided.

Henry built a home on Prospect street in Groton Junction in 1860 and after the war in 1865 moved to Fitchburg, where he now resides. Walter E. died at Ayer in 1872.

Charles Dickson before referred to will be remembered by old Groton people as residing on the old homestead on Farmers' Row, and that he did a teaming business to Boston, taking down hay and returning with general merchandise for the storekeepers of the town. One of his characteristics was to stop wherever night overtook him and continue the trip on the next day and often not going to his own home on Farmers' Row.

An examination of a Middlesex County map published in 1856, shows the residents at the Community, called on the map Nonicanicus Village, when the settlement was at its best and with the changes since Mr. Hall began the settlement as shown on Caleb Butler's map of Groton in 1847.

Instead of Walter Dickson we have Henry Moody and instead of George M. Shattuck, John H. Hartwell. Nathan Davis is living at the Amos Farnsworth farm and Aaron Mason on the Benjamin Moors farm. There are also indicated upon it the new houses of John Fitz, Benjamin Hartwell, Joseph Richards, Minot Leighton, Joseph H. Richardson, Noah Dutton and Lucy M. Richardson and the shop opposite the Hall place is also marked.

From the small beginning in Mr. Richards' house, the dry hop yeast business grew under the energetic hand of Mr. Billings; the quarters were enlarged and then shortly after the large building known as the Yeast House was put up on land bought of Joseph Alva Cushing on the cross road.

In 1852, Daniel Needham for his brother Benjamin, bought out Dutton and Billings after the concern had been going about three years. Billings and Dutton moved to South Groton and formed a partnership with Walter Wright, who built the Yeast House on Pleasant Street, now owned by Joseph P. Mullin, and where Abel Prescott later resided and died. Mr. Billings was the selling agent for the

dry hop yeast his concerns made, when in Groton and South Groton. Albert Billings lived in the cottage house in Groton Junction at the corner of Pleasant and Cambridge Streets, where afterwards Mr. Joseph Billings lived and since moved by Mr. Donlon, the present owner, to make room for his new residence. He afterwards moved to Chicago and amassed a fortune in the manufacture and sale of gas in that city.

Richards and Needham operated the Groton shop until 1860, when the yeast cake business went to pieces. Mr. Richards went to Wisconsin at the time of the exodus to be explained later and Benjamin Needham removed to the "Junction" and opened the Needham House, corner of Forest and Tannery Streets.

The young people of the community were not permitted to be idle and when not obliged to attend school according to the legal requirements, the girls at times worked in the yeast factory or picked berries in season, while the boys, of various ages, worked on the neighboring farms in summer and chopped wood in the winter for Mr. Hall at sixty cents per cord, earning about thirty cents per day.

One day in particular six of them, all under fifteen years of age, were sent to Snake Hill and their employer cheered them on their way when it was twenty-two degrees below zero by calling out, "Smart and tough, I can stand it well enough." On the "other road" at the home of Alva Wright they were compassionately invited in to thaw out their benumbed hands and faces. It was before sunrise and Mrs. Wright exclaimed, "Why you poor boys! my girls of your age are still in bed."

Some of these boys remember to this day how their earnings were much reduced by paying for damage to the wood by a noontday fire which was allowed to get out of bounds and how one of their number ran all the way home from Snake Hill for help. They do not forget how the neighborhood had to contribute by buying up some of their blackened "crocky" wood at the usual price.

In 1863, Joseph H. Richardson while living in Vermont purchased the "Yeast House," and returning to Groton, removed the dry house portion in



Old Chapel—Groton School.



Home of John J. Graves. 1834—1869.



Hackett Home. 1860—1911.



**Instructor's House—Groton School.
Near the site of John H. Hartwell House.**

which the yeast cakes had been dried on stacks of wooden frames strung with crossed meshes of cotton twine.

Some years later he sold the place to one French, who sold to John Swan. Abel L. Lawton then took the title and conveyed to Mr. George Whitney, May 28, 1888. The building went up in smoke April 1, 1890, and upon the lot now stands the Benjamin F. Hartwell house, moved over in May 1904, from its original location.

The young people of forty years ago will recall the dances and revivals held in 1871, in the large room at the yeast house and where an old man in the "seventy tooth" year of his age often spoke. These revival meetings were attended by a great many "from the region around about," as a diary kept at that time states. August 18th, 1871, "the yeast house was crowded full." It seems meetings had already been held at the school house and on July 9th, 1871, at Captain Coachman's house which he had bought of Mrs. Newman in the spring of that year.

In August 1878, revivals were held by an evangelist in a large tent in the field at rear of the Hall place, then owned by Mr. Daggett, which many attended.

There were some causes, a sort of inside history, which led to the breaking up of the Community life. Mr. Hall's second wife had been long dead and he a strong vigorous man of sixty-four, had been a leader in the village. His future wife had come into possession of a large tract of land in Germania, Marquette County, Wisconsin, and Mr. Hall, becoming interested in the lady, also became interested in the land.

They first went to Rochester, N. Y., probably in the fall of 1856, where Mrs. Pierce and he were married, and they were domiciled there early in 1858. Mr. and Mrs. Richards and Miss Ellis, a daughter of Mrs. Hall by a former husband, joined them in May, 1858, and in the fall of 1859, Mr. Hall and family were well settled on the Wisconsin tract.

Rochester, N. Y., was then the location of a small colony of the sect and letters sent back to Groton were "filled with mighty truth."

The glowing accounts of the new home in Wisconsin led some, but not all, of those at the community to ar-

range for the disposal of their estates and follow.

An immense auction sale of some fifteen parcels of land and ten dwellings was advertised in Boston and Groton Junction papers for March 14, 1860, which included the homes of Hall, Parker, Cushing, Fitz, Richards, Leighton, Hale, Green, the yeast house and the John H. Hartwell farm. John H. Hartwell was deputed to show the property and Col. Needham, who was then living in Vermont, was given power of attorney to make transfers.

About \$20,000 were realized from this sale which over three hundred attended from towns near and remote.

The Hale house burned down before the sale, the yeast house was bid in by the mortgagee as was also the Richards place.

The Hall farm was bought by Abel H. Fuller, the John Hartwell place by Joshua Waitt, the Cushing house by Mr. Newman, the Leighton house by Lyman Blood, and the Green house by John Hackett.

We now come to the general exodus when about twenty-five souls took train together for Wisconsin, their household goods following in three freight cars. The colonists were: Minot Leighton family, five; Rodolphus Parker family, four; John H. Hartwell family, five; Joseph Cushing family, three; Walter Keyes and wife, Martha Lunt, Serina Perham, Rebecca Green, Jane Howe, Julia Hale.

In April, 1860, they arrived in the new country and lived in a large house provided by Mr. Hall until they could erect their own homes on land from out his tract.

Mr. Benjamin F. Hartwell and Mrs. Lucy M. Richardson, close neighbors, did not approve of the removal and of all those formerly associating, they and their families remained.

Subsequent to the departure of Mr. Hall for the west, one, Isaac Newton of Lunenburg, for a short time attempted to arouse the flagging interest in Adventism and conducted meetings in the hall, but he did not possess the power of attracting and holding his hearers that his predecessor had and his efforts resulted in failure.

He would work himself into a high state of frenzy and extending his arms above his head would picture to his congregation the overwhelming

wrath to come and wildly shout, "Armageddon is rolling on."

After 1863, in the Wisconsin country, the fortunes of Mr. Hall greatly increased. His brother William in England had died and left a large estate, which after crown taxes were paid, left about \$80,000 to each of five heirs in America of which Mr. Hall was one.

A large part of this was used in the further development of the western colony and at Germania and Montello, the county seat, mills were built, in the management of which, Col. Needham gave valuable time and assistance, residing there at intervals.

Mr. Hall died at Germania, October 31, 1879, much respected and lamented.

As showing the type of man and the consideration he received in the new west, the following sketch is taken from the Montello Express in a November, 1879, issue: "Mr. Hall was probably the most remarkable man that ever lived in Marquette County. Mr. Hall was of all others the most thorough and the most finished business man in this part of the country, always active, with more punctuality and system and precision than can be found in the average business man.

"He would never wait a single moment for opportunities, but always created them himself and shaped them to his liking; and why should he not? With a large brain, an early education and training and strong robust constitution and an active, willing mind, there was no combination of earthly powers that could restrain him or hold him in check."

It has been claimed that Mr. Hall had a sort of hypnotic influence over some, and it is sufficient to say that in Groton he finally lost his control over some of his old-time friends who had lost faith in him. This undoubtedly led to the ending of this advent community which differed from other communities in that they owned nothing in common except a common belief.

Before 1860 John Mekeen Gilson bought the Levi Stone farm just south of school No. 2 beyond the big pine woods, and had sold the dwelling house to one Otis, who moved it up on the hill towards Groton, but he became discouraged and never finished it, and in the early seventies it became a ruin and all the windows in

it were out of it, so to speak. What the school boys failed to destroy the winds and weather finished and a depression in the pasture marks the cellar of the house.

Near here Russell lane, closed to travel before 1850, led easterly across the railroad to the Summer Boynton farm on the "other road" and where a small stream flows down beside the track, Samuel N. Hartwell had repaired an old dam and flowed up a considerable pond for skating on his father's farm to the delight of his youthful companions, as it is to-day for the Groton School boys.

The pasture was sold in 1860 by Mr. Hartwell to Mr. John M. Gilson and is now a part of the holdings of the last-mentioned school and used for golf links.

The house occupied in the sixties by Noah Moulton was the one built for Nabby Stanley before 1835.

Another old landmark is the big roof house at the top of the hill on the Ayer-Groton road, which, when purchased by Mrs. Lucy M. Richardson, was really two houses close together. Mrs. Richardson had Benjamin F. Hartwell cover the whole with one large roof and fill in between with other rooms, not a difficult job for Mr. Hartwell, who as a climax to his building career erected for the town the new High school building in 1870, at Groton Centre.

Mrs. Richardson sold the big roof house to Benjamin Needham for his occupancy, when he operated the yeast factory and she also sold the Richards place to Mrs. Ann Gilson.

An account of the Community would be incomplete without mention of the associations of old No. 2, or Moors school as it was afterwards called by vote March 2, 1874, from the Moors family who lived near it for generations on the the Junction road.

This schoolhouse was probably built in 1792, with several others and the old hipped-roof was replaced in 1856, by the present one.

Dr. Samuel A. Green, the historian of Groton, informs me that the present building was standing in 1817, as he was often reminded by his father, Dr. Joshua Green, who taught school there for one year, during his college course at Harvard which extended over the years 1814 to 1818.



Butler High School. Built 1870.



House of the Big Roof. 1857—1911.



Lawrence Academy—Second Building. Dedicated June 29, 1871.



Moors School. 1792—1911.

It is doubtful if a complete list of teachers of this school will ever be made, for the old records of the schools of Groton are rather brief and some of the loose sheets or books are undoubtedly lost.

The list of teachers and pupils for the earlier years will probably never be fully known, but the names here given have been obtained from various sources, chiefly from the registers since 1851. The extended list of pupils is interesting as showing the names of families living in the community neighborhood during that period.

For many years it was the custom to have a woman teacher in the summer term and a man teacher in the winter when the big boys attended and he was supposed to be able to thrash all whom he judged to need it.

The list of teachers so far obtained is as follows:

- 1802-3. John Farrar.
 1817. Joshua Green.
 1818 to 1847. Curtis Lawrence; Clifford Belcher; Maria Nutting; Elizabeth Jacobs; Cynthia Jacobs; Artemas Longley.
 1847. Harriet B. Harwood; Curtis Lawrence.
 1849. Susan F. Lawrence; J. Otis Whitney.
 1850. Agnes B. Pollard; Hollis Carr.
 1851. Agnes B. Pollard; John P. Towne.
 1852. Alma Willard; Alden Ladd.
 1853. Agnes B. Pollard; Alden Ladd.
 1854. Mary E. Andrews; Mary P. Baker.
 1855. Mary P. Baker; Charles O. Thompson.
 1856. Jane E. Davis; Solomon Flagg.
 1857. Amanda Parsons; J. E. Westgate.
 1858. Elizabeth Graham; Cecil F. P. Bancroft.
 1859. Susan F. Bancroft; Cecil F. P. Bancroft.
 1860. Susan F. Bancroft; Rufus Livermore.
 1861. Susan F. Bancroft; George A. Bruce.
 1862. Julia M. Page; Charles E. Bigelow.
 1863. Emma C. Hartwell; Emma C. Hartwell.
 1864. Emma C. Hartwell; Benjamin H. Hartwell.
 1865. Lizzie S. Jaquith; Maria Wright.
 1866. Fannie E. Wright; James C. C. Parker.
 1867. Fannie E. Wright; Jennie Wright.
 1868. Cynthia A. Goodnow; Andrew F. Reed.
 1869. Arabella Prescott; Andrew F. Reed.
 1870. Jennie A. Hunt; Jennie Wright, two terms.
 1871. Jennie Wright, three terms.
 1872. Jennie Wright; Lucy Hill; Ellen M. Torrey.
 1873-4-5-6. Ellen M. Torrey.
 1877. Ellen M. Torrey Mason, thirteen terms in all.
 1877. Clara F. Woods, three terms.
 1878. Clara F. Woods; Abby D. Penman; J. H. Warren.
 1879. Anna Bancroft, two terms; Sarah F. Longley, one term.
 1880-1891. Sarah F. Longley, thirty-six terms.
 1892. Dora L. Bailey taught in winter.
 1892-3. Nannette J. May, three terms.
 1893. M. Leola Wright, one term.
 1893. Sarah F. Longley, one term.
 1894-1907. Sarah F. Longley, forty-two terms.
 1908. Mary H. Kimball, two terms.
 1908-1911. Sarah F. Longley, eight terms.

In the above list where there are two names the first name in each year was the teacher for the spring term and the second for the winter term, which extended over into the next year and both terms varied somewhat in length according to the amount of money available in the district.

The two Bancrofts teaching in 1859 were sister and brother, as were also the two Hartwells who taught in 1864.

Mr. Bancroft afterwards became principal of Phillips Academy at Andover, Mass., and Mr. Hartwell was the late Dr. Hartwell of Ayer, who was a successful teacher, before he entered upon the profession in which he became so eminent. In the winter of 1859 he was a pupil in the same school with his brother Harris.

During the years of the long service of Miss Longley at her request she was relieved that she might spend a season in California, and her total number of terms of teaching at this school including the present one, is eighty-eight.

Now that we are older grown we are inclined to excuse our dear old

teachers for sundry penalties inflicted upon us for misbehavior. We think to-day, that we would never again merit punishment and be obliged to toe the mark or hold our finger on a particular nail head in the floor with bended back and watch at the knot hole until we caught the little mouse.

One old scholar recalls how a lot of boys had to "squat" in a row "down front," sitting on the calves of their legs, as a punishment for prolonging their recess on the ice at the pond in the pasture. They never forget that difficult task.

How did we ever manage to sit under the teacher's desk, where we would be in readiness to accept the promised punishment after school. Never again would we put a board on the chimney to smoke out the school so that we might have a recess and be compelled to carry the smoking stove out of doors, fire and all.

We wish now we had been teacher's favorite scholar so that "me an'" Charlie could go over to the spring and get a pail of water and the farther spring was the one selected, of course.

When the spelling match was on how slyly we would miss the word because we hated to go above our dear schoolmate and she shyly and perhaps half unwillingly accepted the intended favor and thanked us with her smile. When we were quite younger what a disgrace it was to be made to sit on the girl's side by the side of a girl. Still we have all changed since then. The older ones always coveted the back seats even if they had to stretch to make their feet touch the floor. How delighted the scholars were when our teacher was permitted to make an ascension in the balloon after it had alighted at the Sumner Graves farm on September 27, 1871.

These were only incidents out of a countless number occurring in a very busy school. All the quarrels and petty jealousies in scholarship and otherwise are smoothed over and the old scholars can feel that they tried to improve the passing time.

Some of the boys and girls went from this school to the academy and high school at Groton Centre, but it was here they laid the foundation for a useful career.

The former pupils of old No. 2 now

living will hold in loving remembrance those teachers who endeavored to implant in their minds a desire for a better education than those who preceded them were permitted to enjoy.

On the Moors farm in 1847, lived Benjamin Moors, a venerable man who used to ride about in a yellow chaise, one of the relics of earlier days and near here, as shown on the 1847 map, Horace Evans, grandfather of Harrison E. Evans of Ayer, lived in a house which was moved on wheels by oxen to South Groton to the present Bligh street by Mr. Bligh, a railroad contractor during the construction period.

Aaron Mason bought the Moors farm in 1850. The former owner had a large hop field and a hop house on the land where the house of James Culver now stands, but Mr. Mason with strong temperance principles would have none of it. He moved away the hop house, cut up the hop poles for firewood and planted the fields with crops that did not enter into malted liquors. He was blessed with four daughters—Lizzie, before mentioned; Susan, who married Philip D. Dickson; Ellen, who married Valancourt Stone, and Martha, who married Alonzo E. Willis.

Mr. Mason moved to South Groton in 1855, after he had sold to Elisha Gould Culver of West Hartford, Vermont, and for a while he lived at the present J. H. Whitcomb house and on Cambridge street in a house near Columbia street. He then built the house now occupied by Mrs. Ella Stone, where he died April 8, 1875, aged seventy-five years,—five years after the death of Mrs. Mason.

Their four daughters lie beside their parents in the Mason lot in Woodlawn Cemetery at Ayer.

Mr. Culver sold the farm to Mr. Hariman and he, in 1859, to William Chase and Mr. Chase in 1867 sold it to Nathan Franklin Culver who had married Mary Farnsworth, a ward of "Aunt Betsey" Farnsworth.

On the road towards Groton as early as 1834, there lived John Jackson Graves, who owned most of the land where the Groton School buildings now are. Mr. Graves was a country trader and butcher, and was full of palaver, jovial and good natured, and was familiarly known as "Jack" Graves, by virtue of his two



Fives Court.



**Aaron Mason Home. 1850—1855.
Erected 1826.**



Groton Academy. Erected 1793—Burned July 4, 1868.



Home of John H. Hartwell. 1847—1860.

given names. He moved to Groton Centre in 1869, and died there in 1871, aged fifty-nine.

On the place, in later years known as the Scanlan place, lived old Tom Dodge, a queer fellow who always wore a leather apron and if asked to ride would reply, "No too big a hurry." It was directly opposite the Scanlan place that the first chapel of the Groton school was built. It was in October, 1905, moved to Groton, and remodelled, and is now the Catholic church in the village.

In 1849, Nathan Franklin Culver lived in the John Page house, a very old house in Groton. This stood in the northeast corner of the Graves farm on the west side of Farmers' Row, and was taken down in 1870.

John Page was an original proprietor in Groton, and also owned a saw-mill in the south part of the town, now Ayer. He was the direct ancestor of the late Thomas and Alfred Page, who both lived and died in Ayer.

Osgood Putnam lived on the large farm further along, having moved up from "over the river," where he had been an extensive grower of hops when that was an active industry in New England.

It is doubtful if any country road in New England furnished so many volunteers in the war of the rebellion. From the Luke Farnsworth house to the Waitt farm, a short mile, in which were thirteen consecutive houses, eleven men enlisted. They were: George Farnsworth, Michael Hackett, Thomas Gilson, Sumner Gilson, Alavander Messer, Albion Messer, Charles Messer, Alfred A. Richardson, Rufus B. Richardson, Leander S. Kendall, Harrison Waitt. Five of these were in Co. B, Sixth regiment, recruited in Groton. One of this number, Alfred Austin Richardson, gave up his young life at Suffolk, Virginia, and during the war period his remains were brought to the home of his mother and then taken to Westford for interment. Noah Moulton also enlisted from the neighborhood in Co. B, from the old Nabby Stanley house, before mentioned, on the "Junction" road.

As further showing that the military spirit was not dormant in the Community, we may add to these, others who were boys in the neighborhood at one time, Henry and Walter Dickson, Daniel Kendall and W. H. I.

Hayes, known in the army as "Old Hundred," a name which followed him and was given to a brand of cigars he afterwards manufactured in Lowell where he later lived and died. He is said to have been one of the very youngest "men" to have ever carried a gun in the war, having enlisted at the age of thirteen. The nickname was given him on account of his small stature, youthfulness and droll wit.

For a time he and his mother lived on the Moors farm in the family of William Chase, whose daughter he married.

For returned soldiers settling in the neighborhood we had Jordan Goodwin, Nelson Root, Harrison Goding, John Bishop and John Keating.

When the war was over, the returned soldier boys, lacking a target, used to practice shooting across the field at the abandoned yeast house, and for years there was a bullet hole in the front door said to have been put there by the irrepressible Rufus.

After the 1860 sale, the successive owners of the Hall place were Abel Fuller, William Chase, Alfred Pollard, Abel L. Lawton, Nelson Root, Sumner Hilliard, Mr. Daggett, Mr. Watson, Marshall Davis and finally Mr. William Amory Gardner and the buildings were destroyed by fire February 13, 1891, when occupied by Mr. Jefferson, an instructor at Groton school.

In the early seventies "ghosts" were seen in and about the premises and the youth of the neighborhood stood agape at the house all lighted up with candles. Rev. Crawford Nightingale, in commenting on the circumstance, said in his drawling way: "They are real practical kind of ghosts since they left their candles in dishes of sand."

It is supposed that some one tried to depress the value of the place to the owner at that time by this uncanny display.

On the Shirley road below the Dickson farm, now the Dickinson farm, lived Jacob Pollard and son Alfred and daughters Mary Jane and Sarah. Thomas Pollard, another son, had moved to the Whittemore place near James Brook, and a daughter Agnes had married Asa Stillman Lawrence of Groton. Another daughter Lucy, was the wife of John Jackson Graves.

The frequency of the lawsuits between Jacob Pollard and Sylvester Jacobs, who lived on the "other road," was quite noticeable, and they extended over a long period and were mostly questions of trespass and land damages.

After the death of his wife, Agnes, Asa Stillman Lawrence married the widow of Alfred Pollard and settled the estate of Mr. Pollard to the satisfaction of his wife at least. The second Mrs. Lawrence was Jane, a daughter of Nathaniel Davis, the next door neighbor of the Pollards.

Two daughters of Jacob Pollard, Mrs. Mary Jane Hazen Hastings and Mrs. Sarah Pollard Holt, are both living in Sterling and are considerably over eighty years of age.

The Nathaniel Davis place, where more recently Mr. Achorn lived, was a part of the farm of Major Amos Farnsworth. This portion was also the home of Miss Elizabeth Farnsworth until she sold to Mr. Davis and moved to Groton in 1850, where she died on February 2, 1884, aged ninety-one years. On the lower portion stands the old farmhouse, occupied in 1847, by Luke Farnsworth and his family.

In keeping with their ardor for the defence of the country, have been the efforts of the Community youth to obtain a liberal education. In 1863, Edward D. Dickinson, Henry G. Graves, Samuel L. Graves, Amos B. Putnam, Rufus B. Richardson, Harris C. Hartwell and his sister, Emma C. Hartwell, all attended Lawrence Academy at the same time, and many will recall the friendly rivalry and exchange of information between them. When the boys later came home from college, their vocal efforts in the declination of Greek and Latin words, from house to house, awoke the neighborhood.

Some of them had left school to go to the war and in the period after we find them in various colleges—Rufus Richardson at Yale, Harris Hartwell at Harvard, Samuel Graves and Amos Putnam at Amherst, and Benjamin H. Hartwell at Jefferson Medical college, and Harrison Waitt studying for the ministry. These were followed, a few years later, by two sons of Joseph H. Richardson, Charles H., and Edward A. Richardson, who were both in Yale together in 1880, and by Samuel S. Watson, who went to Harvard in 1881.

While the youth of the period before

1860, were not much encouraged in attending school and were led to believe that work was the chief end to be sought next to the church, those coming after seemed to break away from their restraint. A desire to mingle with the world became manifest and the children of the various newcomers for the last fifty years have lived in a healthful, social atmosphere. We recall many evening gatherings, coasting and skating parties, family picnics and trips to the Nashua for fishing and a plunge in the old swimming hole down near the island, which was once "the neck."

To a one-time resident, the changes in the neighborhood are quite noticeable. The advent of the Groton School in 1884, and its extension has caused the removal of many of the old houses and fire has put its effacing hand on others.

The John Hartwell farm buildings were moved in 1898, and separated, the house now standing just north of the old Graves house and the barn removed into the pasture. This barn was built for Stephen M. Kendall, with timbers cut in the Knops pond woods and sawed out at the old Lothrop mill at the outlet of the pond. The Richards, Leighton and Benjamin Hartwell houses have been removed to make room for the more pretentious buildings of Mr. Gardner, while the erection of the Joy mansion led to the removal of the Parker house in 1885, and the Fitz house, which was taken down after 1900.

The old barn on the Pollard place was burned on May 16, 1877, and that on the Graves place, then owned by the school, was struck by lightning on May 30, 1887, and burned. The Goodwin house, then owned by Mrs. Powell, was destroyed by fire on July 19, 1904. The barn at the Aaron Mason or Culver farm being in a dilapidated condition, was taken down.

Few of the old landmarks remain, but on the ashes of the old ideas, as it were, has arisen this new Phoenix, an active, aggressive institution of learning and lasting benefit.

The changes in ownership of some of the old places in the village have been frequent, and while it has not been the intent of the writer to enumerate the many different families, an attempt has been made to record the movement of those who were liv-

ing there in the Second Advent period.

There were many honest, earnest boys and girls, who have gone out from these homes and filled important places in the world.

The establishment of the Groton school on ground which may rightly be called in the Community, was a distinct epoch in the history of Groton, and the beautiful situation which made life so enjoyable there in former years, has contributed in a large measure to its success apart from the excellent methods of teaching and its management. The sojourner in other lands returns with pleasure to

this delightful country road and to the westward looks across the valley of the Nashua to the extended horizon of distant mountains.

Monadnock, Watatic and Wachusett dominate the view, but the "woods and templed hills" of various points around, all go to make up a picture upon which the eyes, tired of other scenes, seem to rest. It is a glorious prospect and restful in the softness of the outline and one that has made an impress upon all who have lived in this part of the good old town of Groton.

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